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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Lord our God, as our lawmakers take up the duties of this day, give them Your wisdom and guidance. Remind them that You already know their needs, motives, hopes, and fears. Lord, keep them from being awed by difficulties and frightened by problems, as You provide them with wisdom in their decisions and harmony in their interactions. May the work they do today on Capitol Hill have eternal significance.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of A. Marvin Quattlebaum, Jr., of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1865

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1865) to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to clarify that section 230 of such Act does not prohibit the enforcement against providers and users of interactive computer services of Federal and State criminal and civil law relating to sexual exploitation of children or sex trafficking, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

REMEMBERING BILLY GRAHAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday we welcomed the President, the Vice President, and the family of the late Reverend Billy Graham as he lay in honor in the Capitol. This is a very rare tribute—even rarer for an American without government or military service—but it perfectly suits the remarkable man whose preaching inspired millions worldwide, who counseled Presidents and world leaders across generations, and whom an entire nation came to know as America's pastor.

Billy Graham's powerful preaching and his historic revivals brought so

many closer to God because his work was not ultimately about him. "The secret of my work," he explained, "is God. I would be nothing without him." His personal strengths and talents were mighty, but it was his kindness, his humility, and his total fidelity to faith and family that defined his life and his ministry.

I am glad that Congress could honor the great Reverend Graham in this way. Yesterday, thousands—thousands—of Americans packed the Rotunda down the hall to pay their respects. All across the country, people are giving thanks for the extraordinary contributions of this good and faithful servant.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on another matter, it has been just over 2 months since the united Republican government delivered historic tax reform to middle-class families all across the country. How is it working? We have all seen the national news. Walmart is giving raises or new benefits to more than 1 million hourly workers. Boeing is investing \$300 million in workforce development and corporate giving. Apple is bringing hundreds of billions of dollars back home. But no less important are the stories making front-page news in hometown newspapers all across our country.

Thanks to tax reform in North Lima, OH, Sheely's Furniture & Appliance is planning to issue \$1,000 bonuses to full-time workers and expand the sales floor by 4,500 square feet.

In Cushing, OH—population of 220 people—tax reform is allowing John Anfinson to give \$1,000 bonuses and 5 percent pay raises to all of his employees at the farm store that his grandfather founded in 1918, 100 years ago.

"I work every day shoulder to shoulder with everyone," Mr. Anfinson explained. "When you work every day with a group of people, you know them and their family. . . . They are the most valuable asset in any business."

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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His customers will also likely be breathing easier. Tax reform is enabling farmers and ranchers across America to immediately expense the cost of important investments, and it is taking a big bite—a big bite—out of the death tax.

Senators heard stories just like these during last week's State work period. Just ask Senator TOOMEY what tax reform is doing in Pennsylvania. He stopped by New Hudson Facades, a manufacturer in Linwood. Tax reform enabled them to increase wages by 5 percent, and a partner company is contributing \$3,000 to every factory worker's 401(k).

How about in Montana? Senator DAINES' trip across his State took him to Pacific Steel in Great Falls, where sales are up 25 percent—sales are up 25 percent—since tax reform passed.

In West Virginia, Senator CAPITO joined a roundtable at the Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce. She heard from local business leaders about "increased optimism."

In Nevada, 90 percent of the small business owners Senator HELLER recently spoke with said they plan to raise wages, increase benefits, award bonuses, hire more workers, or invest in their operations.

It is a shame our Democratic colleagues still haven't been able to extract themselves from their lockstep opposition to this historic law. If they had gotten their way, none of this good news would have happened—none of it. Only one of the Senators from Pennsylvania voted for the law that is allowing that Linwood manufacturer to expand. Only one Senator from Ohio voted for the new law that is helping those workers in North Lima. Only one Senator from Nevada voted to give small businesses the flexibility to invest more in their employees. Only one Senator from West Virginia and one Senator from Montana voted to take money out of Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of the middle class.

Every single Senate Democrat—every one of them—did all they could to block tax reform. Fortunately, every Republican voted to pass it. And because Congress passed tax reform and the President signed it into law, workers and small business owners are already reaping the benefits.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on Friday, I visited Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, which is located in Howard County, MD, between Washington and Baltimore. I wanted to talk to students about the tragic Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas

High School, in Parkland, FL, which left 17 students and faculty members dead. This is the deadliest high school shooting in American history. I went to Wilde Lake because one of their own teachers, Laura Wallen, was shot to death in September 2017, and her former boyfriend is now on trial for her murder.

I was extremely impressed by the passion of these students. They had a great deal of interest in the subject matter; they were extremely articulate; and they asked great questions. I found it extremely encouraging for the future of Howard County, MD, and this Nation. These students are rightfully concerned about their safety and the safety of their classmates. It has been 2 weeks since a disturbed young man invaded Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The reaction seems to be like clockwork after each shooting. There is bipartisan shock, anger, and horror. Predictably, the question comes out: Will this time be different? The answer for the Republican leaders in Congress has always been "no" as the outrage and call to act quickly falls back to NRA talking points versus reality. This time, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and the students in Maryland and across the country are not taking "no" as the final word. This time, the survivors are leading the way and are speaking out in a forceful way like we have not heard before.

Students like Ryan Deitsch, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, want to know why these students—the children—need to be the ones to speak out "just to save innocent lives," he said. He wants to know why the adults cannot be the adults and do what is necessary to protect children.

I think the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have had a clear, articulate message that this carnage needs to stop. They want to feel safe in their schools again. Armed with their cell phones and their stories, they have taken up the banner of hashtag "never again" and are changing the face of this debate to make this country safer from gun violence.

Alex Wind, another survivor from Stoneman Douglas, laid out the larger problem of why students are mobilizing:

We're marching because it's not just schools. It's movie theaters, it's concerts, it's nightclubs. This kind of stuff can't just happen. You know, we are marching for our lives, we're marching for the 17 lives we lost. And we're marching for our children's lives and our children's children and their children.

So what can we do?

There are several pieces of legislation that are ready to go. The Democrats and some Republicans have been willing and ready to act. Leader MCCONNELL could move any one of these bills right now. Let's start by

making it clear that weapons of war are not needed by civilians of any age. I have cosponsored S. 2095, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2017, offered by Senator FEINSTEIN.

This legislation would, one, ban the sale, manufacture, transfer, and importation of military style assault weapons; two, ban any assault weapon that accepts a detachable ammunition magazine and has one or more military characteristics; three, ban magazines and other ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition, which allow shooters to quickly fire many rounds without needing to reload.

The bill also requires a background check on any future sale, trade, or gifting of an assault weapon that is covered by the bill, and it prohibits the transfer of high-capacity ammunition magazines. It also bans bump fire stocks and other devices that allow semiautomatic weapons to fire at fully automatic rates. Congress should also pass the Background Check Expansion Act, S. 2009, which I have cosponsored and has been offered by Senator MURPHY.

This bill would expand Federal background check requirements to include the sale or transfer of all firearms by private sellers, just as licensed dealers are required to conduct checks for sales under the existing Brady Law. The bill requires background checks for the sales or transfers of all firearms from one private party to another even if either party is not a federally licensed dealer. This requirement extends to all unlicensed sellers whether they do business online, at gun shows, or out of their homes.

According to a recent poll, a record 97 percent of those surveyed said that they support requiring background checks for gun buyers—97 percent. Why can't we get this done? It is not a heavy lift. Americans are with us on this. We need to recognize that saving children's lives is more important than the National Rifle Association.

Congress also should ease restrictions on gun violence research and prevention efforts by removing onerous restrictions on the Centers for Disease Control research. We can improve States' sharing of information with Federal databases that screen gun buyers.

At a townhall last week, Senator RUBIO, when questioned by an audience of students and parents from Stoneman Douglas, said that "the problems we are facing here today cannot be solved by gun laws alone." With that, I agree, but these gun laws will make a difference. Yes, there is no single solution, but we should be united in our willingness to do what we can to save lives.

I agree with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that we must devote more resources to mental health priorities to identify young people who may be about to cause harm to themselves or others.

Let's attack this problem from multiple directions. We cannot raise our hands in the air and give up because there is no one law that can solve the problem. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option when our children are being killed, sometimes by other children, and surrendering to the false logic that the problem is too big to address falls well short of what the American people deserve. We were sent here to our Nation's Capitol to make the tough decisions and to do the right thing.

I agree with Alex Wind that this problem we need to tackle is larger than simply school safety, but I would like to talk about that specifically for one moment.

In an effort to turn the conversation away from an assault weapons ban or closing loopholes in background checks, the President decided to latch on to this idea that we should arm teachers and educators in our schools. We do not need, as President Trump has suggested, more guns in the schools, and we do not need teachers carrying guns. We do know that teachers are hired to teach, not to be security guards.

Let's listen to our educators and say no to this proposal. The answer to keeping guns and gun violence out of our schools is not to bring more guns into the school. The students I talked to at Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, MD, understood that adding more guns would not help the situation and could lead to more problems in the schools themselves. They certainly want to see their buildings more secure, but we can do that through infrastructure improvements, technology, and school resource officers.

Why are these things happening in the United States with such alarming frequency and not elsewhere around the world? Gun-related deaths unfold in tragic circumstances across this country daily, with more than 1,800 people killed by guns this year alone, according to the Gun Violence Archive, a not-for-profit group. Mass shootings often shine the spotlight on the United States and its position as a global outlier.

The number of firearms available to American civilians is estimated to be around 310 million, according to the 2009 National Institute of Justice report.

According to the Small Arms Survey, the exact number of civilian-owned firearms is impossible to pinpoint because of a variety of factors, including arms that go unregistered due to illegal trade and global conflict. Estimates indicate that Americans own nearly half of the 650 million civilian-owned guns in the world today, which is nearly one gun for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Our Nation is well armed. India is home to the second-largest civilian firearm stockpile, estimated at 46 million.

Americans own the most guns per person in the world, with about 4 in 10

saying they either own a gun or live in a home where there is a gun, according to the 2017 Pew Center study. Forty-eight percent of Americans said they grew up in a house with guns. According to the survey, a majority—66 percent—of U.S. gun owners own multiple firearms. The No. 2 country in the world for the largest number of guns per capita is Yemen—a country that is in the throes of a 3-year-old civil war. They trail significantly behind us. They have 54 guns per 100 in Yemen; we have 88 guns per 100 in the United States.

When it comes to gun massacres, the United States is an anomaly. There are more public mass shootings in America than in any other country in the world. The United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population but holds 31 percent of global mass shooters. In Australia, for example, four mass shootings occurred between 1987 and 1996. After those instances, public opinion turned against gun violence, and Parliament passed stricter gun safety laws. Australia hasn't had a mass shooting since.

Gun safety laws work. The public demands that we take action to make our communities safer.

Gun homicide rates are about 25 times higher in the United States than in other developed countries. The United States has one of the highest rates of death by firearms in the developed world, according to World Health Organization data. The calculations based on OECD data from 2010 show that Americans are 51 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than people in the UK.

Most American gun owners say that a major reason they own a gun is for personal protection, according to the Pew study. However, the majority of firearms-related deaths are attributable to self-harm. Gun-related suicides are eight times higher in the United States than in other high-income nations.

Thinking of Stoneman Douglas High School, we all wonder out loud, what drove this young man to kill indiscriminantly? There is no one single reason, but that is no excuse for Congress and lawmakers in all of our States to remain frozen and fail to act to try to stop a future shooting from happening. If anything, it should be the impetus for us to move forward on many fronts and to take many actions to support our children and support our communities so more lives are not lost in such a violent way.

We cannot allow the story of this shooting to end like all the others in recent history. We should have taken action after three students were killed and five wounded in December 1997 at a high school in West Paducah, KY. We should have taken action after two students opened fire on April 20, 1999, in Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, killing 12 classmates and a teacher and wounding 26 others. We should have taken action after a gunman fa-

tally shot 32 people in a dorm and classrooms at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, on April 16, 2007.

Columbine, Virginia Tech—for a period, these names became a code for some of the worst killings in our history. Nearly 5 years later, it happened again. Three students were killed and two wounded in a shooting on February 27, 2012, that started in a school cafeteria in Chardon, OH, as students waited for buses to other schools. Then there was Sandy Hook. I know we all remember a 20-year-old gunman, in December of 2012, killing 20 first grade children and 6 educators inside Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT—elementary school students. These were first graders, for goodness' sake, young children who should clearly have moved us to action. But no. The killings continued because the Republican leadership has been unwilling to budge from the NRA-approved message.

We have had bipartisan support for some of this legislation, as we do today, but too many are so afraid of the NRA response that they lose sight of the fact that children are being killed right before our eyes.

On September 8, 2016, a 14-year-old girl died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting and killing another female student at Alpine High School in West Texas.

Just 20 days later, on September 28, a 6-year-old boy was fatally shot on the playground of Townville Elementary School in South Carolina by a 14-year-old boy who had just killed his father. Another child and a teacher were struck by bullets but survived.

I know some of you are thinking: I haven't heard about these shootings. That is a problem in and of itself. School shootings have become so commonplace and so much a part of our lives that children dying in our schools may not make it into the paper. We might miss it. We cannot let this become commonplace. It cannot be the new norm.

Another incident you may not have heard of happened last April. A gunman opened fire in the special education classroom of his estranged wife at North Park Elementary School in San Bernardino, CA, killing her and an 8-year-old boy and wounding another child.

In September of last year, in Rockford, WA, a 15-year-old boy was killed at Freeman High School and three female students were wounded when authorities say another 15-year-old boy opened fire with a handgun.

In December of last year, two students at Aztec High School in New Mexico were killed by a gunman disguised as a student.

Barely a month ago, in January, 2 students were killed and 14 wounded by gunfire when a student opened fire before classes began at Marshall County High School in West Kentucky. A 15-year-old—a 15-year-old—is being charged for this crime.

This time, the survivors are speaking out in a forceful way like we have not

heard before. I think the students speaking out have had a clear, articulate message that this carnage needs to stop. I am not sure I know any lawmaker or American who would disagree with the idea that our students need to be safe in their schools. It means that we need to act—really act this time.

Setting aside the outrageous idea of arming teachers, it has been heartening to see the President move in the direction of legislative solutions, such as expanding background checks and banning bump stocks. The devil is always in the details, and we will see how far the President is willing to stray from the NRA and whether the Republican leadership will back the President or remain on the sidelines of protecting the American people and especially our children.

On that Valentine's Day, February 14, when I heard about the shooting in Parkland, FL, my immediate reaction was horror, pain, and outrage. How could we allow this to happen yet again? Schools should be a safe harbor for our children, not a place of killing and terror. I was in my office thinking about how tragic this is, not only for those who were killed but for all the children who were there. I am as frustrated as the people across this country. I want to pass commonsense gun safety legislation. Why shouldn't we get these military-style weapons off the streets?

It is hard to know what will motivate the congressional leadership to bring up this issue, what will jar them to action. I want action. We may not solve the problem entirely, but we need to try. We need to do something.

A new CNN poll released just this Sunday finds that 70 percent of Americans now back tougher gun laws. This is a huge jump from 52 percent after the tragic, horrific October shootings in Las Vegas. This number includes 49 percent of Republicans, which I think is encouraging. Saving lives should not be a partisan issue. Commonsense gun safety legislation should not be a partisan issue.

Public opinion polls may not be perfect, but they are generally helpful to show trends. Americans are getting it. It is time that we do. This trend toward protecting the American people, and especially our children, is moving in the right direction. The American people are letting their voices be heard on this issue.

Thoughts and prayers might console the grieving for a moment, but action speaks louder and will have a lasting impact. From my hometown of Baltimore to the many towns across America that have had their names in the headlines because of gun-related tragedies or mass shootings, people are calling upon Congress to act.

I don't care what the reasons are for a change of heart, but let's get bills on the floor. What we are proposing are logical next steps to address the deadly problem that has been festering in this country for too long. Too many young

lives have been lost. Will this time be different?

Mr. President, in honor of the victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, I ask unanimous consent that their names be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Alyssa Alhadeff, 14; Scott Beigel, 35; Martin Duque Anguiano, 14; Nicholas Dworet, 17; Aaron Feis, 37; Jaime Guttenberg, 14; Chris Hixon, 49; Luke Hoyer, 15; Cara Loughran, 14; Gina Montalto, 14; Joaquin Oliver, 17; Alaina Petty, 14; Meadow Pollack, 18; Helena Ramsay, 17; Alex Schachter, 14; Carmen Schentrup, 16; Peter Wang, 15.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, to all the victims of gun violence who have preceded them, let's make the answer a resounding yes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this morning, I would like to start off speaking about a very important day in the history of my State, a day that inspires pride in the hearts of all those who were born in Texas. I am here to commemorate Texas Independence Day, which will be celebrated tomorrow.

On March 2, 1836, Texas adopted its Declaration of Independence from Mexico. It is worth reading, and I would recommend it to anyone. This happened in the context of a struggle that is perhaps best remembered by the Battle of the Alamo, which laid some of the groundwork for Texans' eventual victory.

On February 24 of that year, with his position under siege, an important figure named William Barret Travis wrote a letter, which I would like to read. He was a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army, and during the battle, his fellow soldiers were outnumbered nearly 10 to 1 by the forces of the Mexican dictator Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Here in the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats have had the honor of reading the fabled Travis letter since 1961, when then-Texas Senator John Tower started that tradition. The letter was addressed "To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World." Travis wrote:

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man—The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own

honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

Signed, "William Barret Travis."

What a letter it is. It is a reminder for all of us that the 189 defenders of the Alamo lost their lives, but they did not die in vain. In fact, Texans wouldn't be around today if it weren't for them.

The Battle of the Alamo bought precious time for the Texas revolutionaries, allowing General Sam Houston to maneuver his army into a position for the decisive victory at the Battle of San Jacinto. I would just note that I am honored to occupy the same Senate seat first occupied by Sam Houston when he became a U.S. Senator after Texas became annexed to the United States in 1845.

With that victory at the Battle of San Jacinto, Texas became a sovereign nation—the Republic of Texas—for 9 years. For 9 years, it thrived as a separate nation, and then in 1845 it was annexed to the United States as the 28th State.

Many Texas patriots who fought in the revolution went on to serve in the U.S. Congress—Sam Houston being one of them. Every single day, I am honored to have the opportunity to serve 28 million Texans—a chance I wouldn't have had without the sacrifices made by the brave men like William Barrett Travis 182 years ago.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on another matter, we have come a long way since the days of the Texas revolution, but Texas remains a place of optimism, fortitude, and dedication to worthy causes. It is also a bustling State, full of entrepreneurs, investors, and risk-takers who have created jobs and opportunities for the people who live there. I would like to mention briefly two iconic companies that are showing their devotion to Texas in a much different but important manner.

In Tyler, they are spreading the good news of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the law we passed in December, which overhauled our Tax Code. For those not familiar with where Tyler is, it is out in East Texas. We sometimes refer to that as "behind the pine curtain." The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act effects have been far-reaching. They have positively affected communities all across the country for the past 2 months, and Tyler is no exception.

The first company I would like to mention is Greenberg Turkeys, a family-owned operation that sells the famous Thanksgiving bird to around 200,000 customers each holiday season. Four generations of the Greenberg family have worked in the company since the 1940s, and its turkeys have been featured on Oprah Winfrey's website as one of her favorite things—twice, in fact. As a result of the tax reforms we have passed, the company plans to refurbish its plant and give hourly employees a raise. Sam Greenberg, the president, said:

This is a really good deal for businesses. It pays to treat people right, and so we want to share this with our workers.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

The second Tyler company I want to mention briefly is Don's TV & Appliance. The staff there has more than 150 years of combined experience. It buys products direct from manufacturers at the lowest possible cost in order to provide customers with prices that are competitive with national chain stores. Recently, the owner, Don Thedford, and his son Donnie announced they would give their employees raises in 2018, which they were not able to do for the past several years, and they would not have been able to do it but for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Thanks to those reforms, Don has been able to help out his employees to provide them more take-home pay, and I am sure they appreciate the extra money in their paycheck each pay period. They can use these savings to invest, to pay for their children's education, prepare for their retirement, or whatever they find best.

So I just wanted to say to Don and other small employers who are making sure their employees see the benefit of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act reforms: Thank you for paying the savings forward. I can't wait to continue to hear more stories like these two in the months ahead.

FIX NICS BILL

Mr. President, on a final note, I would like to bring up one last topic we have been discussing a lot this last week; that is, ways we can prevent mass shootings from happening in the future. Of course, the most recent one occurred at Parkland, FL, at Stoneman Douglas High School.

Last fall, my State saw another in-sidious shooting at Sutherland Springs near San Antonio, TX. Twenty-six people lost their lives that day worshipping in a small Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, and 20 more were wounded, including a 6-year-old boy named Ryland Ward, who was shot five times. We are ecstatic Ryland survived and is now out of the hospital and has gone home.

What we all learned in the aftermath of that event is that sometimes these horrific crimes are perpetrated by individuals who never should have been able to purchase firearms in the first place. That is because, under current law, convicted felons, like the gunman at Sutherland Springs, are prohibited from legally purchasing firearms. The problem was that his convictions were not uploaded in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, what is commonly referred to as the NICS system operated by the FBI.

I have introduced a bill that has already passed the House that would address this problem and, I believe, would save lives in the future. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation cosponsored by the junior Senator from Connecticut. Senator MURPHY, along with his colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL,

come from the State that saw the horrific killings at Sandy Hook. We added 10 new cosponsors just this week, bringing the total number to 50 cosponsors for this legislation. In my experience, it is rare to see a piece of legislation enjoy such broad, bipartisan support—50 cosponsors.

I have been saying all week that we need to pass this bill now. We should not wait, we should not go home emptyhanded, and we should not have to face the grieving families who lost a child or a loved one as a result of a future shooting that might have been averted had we acted. America is tired of the government's response to these catastrophes which rip families apart, take lives, and pit people against each other. The response of their government has been largely either silence or bickering with no outcome, no result.

There are other proposals we can consider as we continue to grapple with the questions posed in Parkland—questions about failures of local law enforcement, social media platforms, and the FBI. Yesterday, the President hosted an amazing meeting of 17 Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis and brainstormed about other things we might be able to do, but right now—right now—fix NICS is our best and only option to act in response. It is supported by the President, the majority and minority leaders are cosponsors, and it is supported by gun groups like the NRA and Everytown for Gun Safety, which are at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum when it comes to the Second Amendment. As I said, this bill has 50 cosponsors in the Senate and is ready for action, having already passed the House of Representatives.

I pledged to myself, after my wife and I visited Sutherland Springs a week after the terrible shooting there and attended a church service led by the pastor who lost his 14-year-old daughter in that shooting just 1 week before—it was a gut-wrenching, emotional service, but it was inspiring in its own way. I pledged then that I would never face another grieving family with empty hands, saying we could have done something that might have saved your child's life or your loved one's life by fixing the broken background check system. I pledged I would never face them again, saying we didn't try our best to save lives in the future by passing commonsense, bipartisan legislation like the Fix NICS bill.

As I said, there are other things we might do, but, as we all know, the threshold for actually passing legislation is 60 votes. What I don't want us to do is to end up like we did on the DACA debate, where we started with a neutral bill—a shell which really did nothing—and all of the various proposals failed to get 60 votes, so we ended up emptyhanded on the DACA issue. I don't want that to happen again, and I am not going to go home and tell my constituents in Texas I didn't do my very best to make sure we

did something and something meaningful that would save lives in the future. Fix NICS is the best way to do that and do that now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the tragedy in Parkland and the responsibilities of the Senate to try to make our communities safer. I am going to talk very personally about my own experience in confronting gun violence as a mayor of an urban area, Richmond, VA, and as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I will start by saying, I am a gun owner. I am a Second Amendment supporter. When I was an attorney in private practice, I was the lawyer who worked with an effort to amend the Virginia constitution to guarantee Virginians the right to hunt and fish. The Second Amendment and private gun ownership is an important part of our framework. I support it, but I obviously believe that we can do things consistent with the Constitution that will make our Nation safer, and I ask my colleagues to join in that effort.

When I was elected to the Richmond City Council in 1994, Richmond, at that time, was only on one top 10 list that I am aware of. It is not the one you want to be on. We had the second highest homicide rate in the United States. We were not a high-crime area generally, if you looked at all crime, but in homicides and aggravated assaults—assaults committed with weapons—we were unusually high. The weapons of choice in these homicides and aggravated assaults were guns.

I remember very early in my time at the city council getting called to a neighborhood, Gilpin Court, which is a public housing community in my city council district. There had been a gun crime that killed an entire family of five—adults and little children.

Over the course of my 8 years of working in local government, I went to too many crime scenes and funerals and wakes. In some ways, the things that were the most memorable were the meetings in church basements of the families of homicide victims. We embarked upon a set of strategies to make our communities safer. Amidst all the bloodshed and the tears, we actually found strategies—some dealing with reductions in guns, some dealing with law enforcement strategies, some dealing with police and community relations. We found strategies that, over the course of about 8 years, reduced the

homicide rate in Richmond by 60 percent and the aggravated assault rate by an equivalent number.

Out of the pain, what we learned is you can actually take concrete steps that will make your community safer and that will reduce gun violence. You will not eliminate it. That is beyond our power as humble people to do, but you can reduce it. If you know you can, then you must. You have a responsibility to do what you can.

I was elected Governor of Virginia in 2005, and I will never forget April 16, 2007. I had just embarked on a trade mission. I had landed in Japan with a delegation to recruit business to my State. I had gone to the hotel, and I got a call after midnight from my chief of staff, who said: There is a shooting under way at Virginia Tech.

I said: Book me on the next flight home. I have been here for just a few hours on what was going to be a 2-week trade mission, but let me fly back home.

I flew back to what, at the time, was the worst shooting in the history of the United States. In April of 2007, 32 people were gunned down on the campus of Virginia Tech by a deranged youngster who had been adjudicated mentally ill and dangerous and was thus prohibited from having a weapon. But because of glitches and flaws in the background check system, he had been able to purchase multiple weapons, and he committed that horrible crime.

I empaneled a commission. I told them: Let the lawyers and lawsuits be damned. I want to know everything that went wrong, and I want to make public everything that went wrong and everything we can do to fix it. Over the course of a number of months, they produced a report with hundreds of recommendations.

The recommendations were about campus safety. The recommendations were about mental health, but there were also recommendations about fixes to our State and Federal gun laws to reduce the risk of this happening. I was able to make some changes on my own as an executive. I took other changes to my legislature that they rejected.

Again, out of the painful situation—and it is a funny thing to say about your own State, about my State of Virginia, about a place I love like Virginia Tech—I always hoped it would be the worst. I had always hoped that would have been the worst shooting in the history of the United States, but the Pulse nightclub shooting and the Las Vegas shooting now have claimed more victims. Other shootings, like those in Newtown and now Parkland—if the number of victims aren't the same, the tragedy is nevertheless of equal magnitude.

We learn through pain that you can make changes and improve. When I fixed a piece of the background check system flaw, it made us safer. It reduced the risk of gun violence and gun deaths.

My experience as mayor and Governor were painful, but I learned a les-

son in both, which is you can take steps, including steps dealing with the rules about firearms that will make your communities safer. That is a powerful thing. You can take steps that will make communities safer.

I dealt with three lies—three falsehoods—over the course of these efforts as mayor and Governor, as I tried to help us take steps to make us safer.

The first lie was it is not about guns. It is about mental health; it is about other things. But that is just false. Equally false would be if we said that it is only about guns. That would be false as well. To say it is not about guns is a lie perpetrated by an organization headquartered in Virginia, the National Rifle Association. It turned out to be false.

The key to reducing the homicide rate in Virginia ultimately was that we embraced strategies to reduce the gun carry rate. That is a phrase that law enforcement professionals use for the percentage of time where people, in normal interactions with the police, are found to be carrying a weapon. In Virginia, the gun carry rate was unusually high, and that meant when something broke bad or there was an argument, there would often be an aggravated assault or homicide committed with a weapon. We undertook strategies that drove down the gun carry rate. That didn't make bad people good people, but it made it more likely that when things broke bad, there wouldn't be an aggravated assault or a homicide.

So it was about the guns. That is the first lie or falsehood that gets perpetrated: It is not about guns. It is not only about guns, but it is definitely about guns.

A second lie or falsehood perpetrated by the same organization is that they would always say: You can't improve. They would say: That will not solve every problem. You can't solve every bit of gun violence if you do this. They would say this over and over again with any shooting. They would point out the number of things that wouldn't have stopped it, as if not being able to eliminate gun violence means that you shouldn't do anything to try to reduce gun violence. That is just a lie or a falsehood. I have learned from my experiences that if you take steps, you can make communities safer.

The third lie or falsehood we had to confront repeatedly from the National Rifle Association was that gun safety rules violate the Second Amendment. That is just flatout wrong. In fact, the Second Amendment is the only amendment whose text even uses the word regulation. The need for a well-regulated militia gives individuals the right to bear arms.

What does the term "well-regulated" mean? It is not a reference to the length of somebody's beard or the kind of hat they should wear. There is an understanding that firearms are dangerous, and if individuals are to have the right to have them, there also must need to be some appropriate level of

regulation. We are familiar with this in the rest of the Constitution.

I am passionate about the First Amendment. There should be freedom of the press, but you can't just libel or slander without consequence. The Framers, Madison and others, who put these amendments together, understood that the amendments to the Constitution included some limitations because we have to live together, not just as individuals who are free agents, but we have to live together in society.

Those three lies—it is not about guns; we can't do anything about it; and the gun rules violate the Second Amendment—are wrong.

I came to the Senate after the shooting in Sandy Hook. The first meaningful debate we had after I came here was whether we would do something to respond to this horrible carnage of kids in an elementary school.

The Presiding Officer was not in the Senate. I know you followed this as a citizen. I remember standing here in this Chamber in April 2013, casting a vote on a bill that I thought would have been a very good bill to do background record checks. We were surrounded in the Chamber by Sandy Hook families. Many of them were sitting next to Virginia Tech families who had come to be in solidarity with them. There was a feeling of despair, with them around, that was like the great cloud of witnesses referred to in the letter of Paul to the Hebrews. We fell short. They were praying for us to succeed, and we fell short. In the aftermath of that horrible tragedy, this body did precisely nothing.

Well, now we have experienced yet another horrible tragedy. There have been others since Sandy Hook, but it is my deep hope that after this horrible shooting in Parkland, something may be different in this body. The reason I think this one might be different is that these students are standing up and challenging us. The children of our Nation are asking adults to be adults. They are asking us to look in the mirror. They posed the question starkly: What is more important to you, your children or campaign contributions from an interest group?

I think the advocacy of the children of Parkland who suffer, not only their advocacy but the advocacy of students all over the United States—I have held meetings with Moms Demand Action in Richmond and Northern Virginia in the last couple of days, and many students were in these meetings. The advocacy of students and their challenge to us may show us a way.

I will conclude with a story that gives me hope and that suggests there may be some resonance to this moment. Sometimes there is a movement, but there isn't a moment. Sometimes the movement needs a moment to achieve a victory.

Fifty-five years ago, in the spring of 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King was trying to desegregate public accommodations in Birmingham, AL, with the

Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He had been going from community to community. In some places, they were able to desegregate public accommodations relatively easily. Other places were tough but none tougher than Birmingham. At drug stores and department stores, Dr. King and others would have adults go sit in—African Americans and their allies—and be arrested. Yet wave after wave of arrests notwithstanding, including the arrest of Dr. King, the city leaders would not back down. They would not shed the discrimination that violated the equality provisions of the Constitution.

As this was going on, children in the Birmingham schools started to come to Dr. King and say: We want to march too.

Dr. King and his lieutenants really struggled with this. They were parents. They didn't want their kids to be arrested. They didn't want their kids to face guard dogs attacking them. They didn't want their kids to face firehoses directed at them. They had a natural parental reaction: We are going to do this; we want to protect you.

But the children kept coming and saying: We want to march too.

Finally, they said: Isn't this about us? As much as it is about adults, isn't this about us, your children? And if it is about your children, why can't we march?

Dr. King, after a lot of prayer and discussion, finally said: It is about you.

Mr. President, you know this, and for our pages especially, it was those children advocating—and they marched, and they did have firehoses turned on them, and they did have guard dogs released on them. The photos of those children braving that ugly face of discrimination landed on the front pages of papers all over the United States and all over the world, and it was transformative of the civil rights movement.

Adults in the United States knew there was discrimination, but they had become complacent to it or indifferent to it or had even said: I think it is wrong, but it will probably never change. But their children demanded of them: Adults, just be adults. Adults, you say you care about children; prove to us you care about children. And when the adults of America were confronted with the example of their own young people, they had to shake themselves out of their complacency and indifference and shoulder the burden that adults must shoulder.

That is what these students at Parkland are saying to us now. That is what these students all over the country are saying to us now. They are saying: This is about our future. This is about your children. And they are asking us whether children matter more or political contributions matter more.

I urge my colleagues, finally, let's not produce another goose egg in this body. Let's not come together after a horrible tragedy—when there are

meaningful steps, such as background record checks, that we can put on the table to make us safer—and fail them yet again.

I ask my colleagues and especially the majority leader to enable us to have this debate on the floor so that we can take meaningful steps of the kind that we know will make our communities safer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

YEMEN WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, there should be no issue of more importance to Members of Congress than the issue of war and peace and when it is appropriate to send the young people of our country into harm's way, knowing that some of them will not return home alive.

It goes without saying that every armed conflict the United States of America is engaged in must be consistent with the Constitution of the United States and be lawful.

Let's make no mistake about it—article I, section 8 of the Constitution states in no uncertain terms that "Congress shall have the power to . . . declare war." The Founding Fathers gave the power to declare war to Congress because Congress is that body most accountable to the people.

For far too long, Congress—under Democratic and Republican administrations—has abdicated its constitutional role in authorizing war. The time is long overdue for Congress to reassert its constitutional authority. If you think that a military intervention makes sense, then let's have that debate on the floors of the Senate and the House and cast a vote. But that is not what we have been seeing for a number of years.

What Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY and I are doing with privileged resolution S.J. Res. 54 is demanding that Congress once again take its constitutional responsibility for war and peace seriously. I thank Senators DURBIN, WARREN, and BOOKER for coming on board that resolution. I hope this bipartisan resolution will gain more and more support in the coming days.

Many Americans are unaware that the people of Yemen are suffering today in a devastating civil war, with Saudi Arabia and their allies on one side and Houthi rebels on the other.

In November of last year, the United Nations emergency relief coordinator said that Yemen was on the brink of "the largest famine the world has seen for many decades." So far, at least 10,000 civilians have died, 3 million have been displaced, and over 40,000 have been wounded in this war. Fifteen million people lack access to clean water and sanitation. More than 20 million people in Yemen—over two-thirds of that country's population—need some kind of humanitarian support, with nearly 10 million in acute need of assistance. More than 1 million suspected cholera cases have been re-

ported—1 million cholera cases have been reported—representing potentially the worst cholera outbreak in world history.

Many Americans probably are not aware that U.S. forces have been actively engaged in support of the Saudis in this terrible war, providing intelligence and aerial refueling of planes whose bombs have killed thousands of people and made this crisis far worse.

We believe—and I speak for Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY—that as Congress has not declared war or authorized military force in this conflict, U.S. involvement in Yemen is unconstitutional and unauthorized, and U.S. military support of the Saudi coalition must end. Without congressional authorization, our engagement in this war should be restricted to providing desperately needed humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts to put an end to this terrible conflict. That is why yesterday we introduced a joint resolution pursuant to the 1973 War Powers Resolution calling for an end to U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen.

The War Powers Resolution defines the introduction of U.S. Armed Forces to include "the assignment of members of such armed forces to command, coordinate, participate in the movement of, or accompany the regular or irregular military forces of any foreign country or government when such military forces are engaged, or there exists an imminent threat that such forces will become engaged, in hostilities." That is from the War Powers Resolution. Assisting with targeting intelligence and refueling warplanes as they bomb those targets clearly meets this definition.

This is not a partisan issue. Support for the Saudi intervention in Yemen began under a Democratic President and has continued under a Republican one. Senator LEE is a conservative Republican. I am a progressive Independent who caucuses with the Democrats.

In November of last year—and it is important that Members of the Senate hear this—the U.S. House of Representatives, by a vote of 366 to 30, passed a nonbinding resolution stating that U.S. involvement in the Yemen civil war is unauthorized. Every Member of the Democratic leadership voted for this. Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI voted for it. Minority Whip STENY HOYER voted for it. The ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, ELIOT ENGEL, voted for it, as did the Republican chairman of that committee, ED ROYCE.

Here is the bottom line: If the President or Members of Congress believe that support for this war is in the U.S. interest and that we should be involved in it, then let them come to the floor of the House and Senate, make their case, and then let's have a vote.

I believe we have become far too comfortable with the United States engaging in military interventions all over the world. We have now been in

Afghanistan for nearly 17 years—the longest war in American history. Our troops are now in Syria under what I believe are questionable authorities, and the administration has indicated that it may broaden that military mission even more.

The time is long overdue for Congress to reassert its constitutional role in determining when and where our country goes to war. I am very proud to be working with Senators LEE, MURPHY, and others on this vitally important issue.

Thank you very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the mass murder in Florida this month, and I rise to ask a simple question that millions of Americans in every part of this country are asking at their kitchen tables right now: Is Congress finally going to do anything meaningful about gun violence? When will enough be enough? What will it take for this body to move beyond the same talking points that we hear after every mass shooting and actually do something to prevent more deaths? Will Congress finally see what the vast majority of Americans see—gun owners and non-gun owners alike—that America's gun problem isn't going away unless Congress musters up the courage to take it head-on, or will Congress continue to give the lipservice of thoughts and prayers and then do absolutely nothing?

We have to act because once again there was a massacre on American soil. Once again it was inside a school. Once again American children were gunned down. We keep living through a nightmare of gun violence that repeats itself in schools, movie theaters, churches, nightclubs, concerts, and every single day on the streets of cities in every State around this country—Sandy Hook, Aurora, Charleston, San Bernardino, Orlando, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, and most recently, Parkland, FL.

We can help stop this. We have the power to help stop this. The question is whether Congress has the political will to do it, whether this institution will finally put families first, our children first, and stand up to the gun manufacturers and the NRA.

I urge every Member of Congress to reflect on why they first ran for office. We are here as public servants to serve the people who sent us here, not to serve the gun industry's profits, not to serve the organizations and companies and lobbyists who demand political retribution when we do the morally right thing. Does Congress have the will to act? Does Congress have the basic courage this country needs? I am sorry to say, I don't know, but we can put it to the test.

There has been a lot of talk—more than normal even—about our need to act in this Chamber. So I will say this to my colleagues: Let's make this time

different. Let's listen to the children from Stoneman Douglas High School. Let's seize this moment. Let's take action.

I implore my colleagues to listen to what the country is saying about gun violence today, listen to the families, listen to the survivors from Parkland and tune out all the other noise. I did. It is possible.

Ten years ago, I had an A rating from the NRA, just like many of my colleagues today, but then I met the mother of Nyasia Pryear-Yard. Then I met her classmates. Nyasia was an honor student from Brooklyn. She was dancing with her friends, having fun, loving life. She was killed by a stray bullet in her community. Now I have an F rating from the NRA.

I don't understand how, after meeting with all of these families, after meeting with all of these children whose lives have been destroyed and torn apart by gun violence—I don't understand how any public servant would not vow to do what is necessary to make sure it never happens again.

It is what we do after a terrorist attack, rightfully so. It is what we do as a country. We come together. We say never again, and we do whatever it takes to protect our country. We have to have the very same sense of urgency now.

Plain and simple, it is a lie to say we have to choose between protecting law-abiding gun owners' rights and protecting our children from being murdered by assault rifles. It is a false choice to say we cannot end gun violence without violating people's constitutional rights. It is time for Members of Congress to stand up for what is right for America and do what is right for our communities, and say no to the NRA.

I commend one of our colleagues in the House of Representatives—a Republican from Florida and an Army veteran—who is seeing this crisis differently now too. He wrote:

I know that my community, our schools, and public gathering places, are not made safer by any person having access to the best killing tool the Army could put in my hands. I cannot support the primary weapon I used to defend our people, being used to kill children I swore to defend.

That is what leadership looks like.

I implore my colleagues in the Senate to see our gun violence problem differently. See it with your heart. See it for what it is. It is a matter of national security, of public health, of public safety that will never go away unless Congress does its job.

So, once and for all, let's pass laws that actually are meaningful, that actually can do something, not just something simple so we can say we did something and move on. I strongly agree with my colleagues that we need to improve the mental health system. Let's make those investments, but it should not stop there.

We have to address the fact that we have weapons of war on our streets

today. We have to address the fact that it is so easy for people to buy a gun—people who should never have that privilege. Let's vote to ban semiautomatic assault rifles.

Congress has already banned fully automatic weapons. Congress has already recognized that some weapons have no place in the civilian world, and a weapon of war that was designed for military use, that can fire up to 100 rounds in 1 minute or 100 rounds if you just add a bump stock, a weapon that can completely outgun a police officer has no place in the civilian world.

Will my colleagues vote with me to ban semiautomatic assault rifles?

Then, let's vote to ban the high-capacity magazines that go with them. They are made for wars; they are not made to be in our schools, not in our cities. High-capacity magazines let killers fire dozens of rounds without having to frequently stop and reload. They are designed to let someone fire bullets at as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time.

Let's vote to ban high-capacity magazines, and let's vote to pass universal background checks. That is something that is so commonsense, so obvious. Too many people who should not get their hands on these weapons are easily able to get them, and there are so many loopholes that allow people to buy semiautomatic assault rifles online, where there are no background checks. They allow people to buy semiautomatic assault rifles at gun shows, where there are no background checks.

It simply doesn't make sense that every person who buys a firearm doesn't go through a basic background check system. Do you know who agrees with that? Ninety-seven percent of the American people. I can't think of any other issue where there is such near-universal agreement across our entire population.

So let's do what our constituents are demanding from us—not what the NRA is demanding from us—and vote to pass universal background checks. When we do it, let's make sure the effort is actually sincere. If we are only voting on universal background checks, when it is tied to the issue of concealed carry reciprocity, then that is not a sincere attempt to fix our broken background check system. If Congress is saying we will only pass universal background checks if we pass a new law that says a stranger from one State has to be allowed into my State or your State when he has a gun hidden under his jacket, that is an insult to 97 percent of the American people who want Congress to pass universal background checks now.

Then, let's finally vote to overturn the outrageous law that has banned the Centers for Disease Control from even studying the issue of gun deaths. The CDC can study any other cause of death—heart disease, cancer, car crashes, plane crashes—unless it involves a gun. Don't you think it is strange that when we debate this issue, the two

things related to gun violence that Congress has actually banned in recent years are research—research on gun violence—and a ban on the ATF from using computers to keep records? Let's vote to allow the CDC to conduct research on gun violence so we can finally have the information and the data we need to fight gun violence as effectively as possible.

Let's also pass a law that finally makes gun trafficking a Federal crime. Over and over again, law enforcement officers keep finding illegally obtained guns being used in crimes. Numerous NYPD officers have been killed by guns that were illegally obtained by criminals, and there is literally no Federal law to stop someone from loading his truck with guns in Georgia, driving up I-95, and selling them in a parking lot in the Bronx directly to criminals and gang members.

I have a bill that would make this illegal. It is called the Hadiya Pendleton and Nyasia Pryear-Yard Gun Trafficking and Crime Prevention Act. It is bipartisan, because both parties agree that gun trafficking is a source of gun violence in our cities.

This bill is named after Nyasia, whom I mentioned earlier, and another teenager from Chicago who was also killed by a stray bullet. Both guns in those crimes were trafficked. So let's pass this bill and finally make gun trafficking a Federal crime.

If we are not trying to solve this problem now, then we are failing as elected leaders. Congress must solve America's gun violence crisis now. It is urgent. Our country is demanding it. Americans deserve more from Congress than just banning bump stocks, just fixing NICS, which, while I strongly support both of them, will not do enough on their own. So let us not fail our country again.

I would like to ask our colleagues to immediately vote to ban semiautomatic assault rifles and bump stocks, to pass a universal background check system and close all of the loopholes, to allow the CDC to research gun violence as a cause of death, to close the gun show loophole, and to finally make gun trafficking a Federal crime.

I yield the floor.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, it was 2 weeks ago yesterday that the tragic incident in Parkland took place—one of many that have impacted our country over the last decade and beyond. That community in Parkland, FL, and the residents of the State of Florida whom I represent—and, frankly, the entire Nation—have demanded not just action but immediate action.

We know—and anyone who watches this process is well aware—that there are deep differences on how far and how much we should restrict the Second Amendment right of every American.

We know there are deep differences about whether some of those proposed restrictions work. I imagine those debates and those differences will not be easily resolved and will continue, but I also know there is widespread support and agreement that we must act now—as soon as possible—to do everything we can to prevent another tragedy like Parkland from happening anywhere else ever again. That is a consensus position. No matter where one falls on this debate, no matter how one feels about how far or how restricted restrictions on gun sales in America should be, no matter what your views are on that, I don't know of anyone who is in favor of school shootings, and I don't know anyone who is in favor of seeing another one happen. There is common ground in that regard.

What I have tried to do, over the last couple of weeks, is undertake efforts to determine what changes in Federal law not only could have prevented this attack but could prevent future ones. In that vein, I have met with State and Federal law enforcement investigators involved not just in this case but in gun laws in general. I have met with students and with teachers from Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, including two teachers who were injured in the attack. I have met with school board administrators. I have met with the community at large, including an appearance last week at a nationally televised townhall. I have been in contact with several of the parents of the victims who lost their lives. I have also spoken to experts in firearm sales. I have spoken to a number of federally licensed firearm dealers who talked about some of the frustrations they have with our existing law and their inability to address people who ultimately turn out to be individuals who should not own any gun of any kind.

So based on these meetings, based on all of this input, and based on all of the other research that is out there leading up to now, the first thing I want to say is, I actually believe this attack could have and should have been prevented if current law had been fully enforced.

This killer was a well-known danger to the school district. He was a well-known danger to the Broward Sheriff's office. He was a well-known danger to his neighborhood. He was also the subject of two separate and specific warnings to law enforcement agencies: a call to the Broward Sheriff's office last November, a call to an FBI hotline in January.

In essence, we are always telling people, if you see something, say something. People saw something and people said something and other people saw it as well over a course of time. Yet somehow this deranged and violent individual was able to pass a background check and purchase not 1 but 10 separate firearms, and this deranged and violent individual was ultimately able to walk right into the school a few minutes before dismissal and take the lives of 17 innocent Floridians.

This tragedy is the result of a massive multisystemic failure—a failure involving Federal agencies, State agencies, and local authorities who all failed to both identify the threat he posed and coordinate a response to stop him before he took action. It is this failure I hope we will focus on by addressing the shortcomings and vulnerabilities in our current laws and in our current policies. We may still have a debate on the broader issues of regulating gun sales, but irrespective of that debate, we still must and should do this.

So today I wanted to come here for a few minutes and announce a comprehensive plan—not a simple bill you just vote on and move on but a series of measures I believe could prevent these attacks before they happen and that also help schools protect their students and their teachers. I believe these ideas should all enjoy bipartisan support, and, if passed, could and should help prevent the next potential mass shooting.

These are ideas I outline not just because they work, but because I believe we can get the votes to pass them. Sixty votes in the Senate, a majority in the House, and the signature of a President—that is what it takes to turn an idea into a law, and these ideas I am about to outline both work and, I believe, could enjoy that widespread support.

One of the things we have learned is, our schools are woefully unprepared to prevent an attack before it occurs. Furthermore, during my visits to the site of the attack and my followup meeting with teachers at the school, I learned of various changes to school facilities and practices which could have stopped this attack or improved the response. Therefore, I will be joining later today with Senator ORRIN HATCH and others in introducing the STOP School Violence Act.

If passed, this law would provide Federal grants to do some important things that would have been really helpful in this case: strengthen school security infrastructure of the school, provide school training for everyone—administrators, teachers, even students—to be able to identify threats and to report them. Something that really would be helpful is the creation of a school threat assessment and crisis intervention team. There is a successful program in Los Angeles that does this. That is a team that is a coordination between law enforcement, other State agencies, school districts and the like where they are all talking to each other about students and former students who may pose a threat of violence and intervene before they act.

A second issue we identified is that even if law enforcement, school administrators, or family members believe an individual poses the risk of committing an act of violence, they have very few options to prevent them from purchasing any gun or taking away the guns they already have.

Therefore, I intend to present a new law—perhaps in coordination with others who are working on it now—that will lead to the creation of gun violence restraining orders, something that will give law enforcement and close family members the option of obtaining a court order to prevent gun sales or remove guns from individuals who pose a threat. To be clear, the due process in such a situation would be on the front end, not on the back end.

The third issue we uncovered is, Federal law appears to discourage school systems from reporting dangerous students to law enforcement. I don't support criminalizing all school misconduct, but a student who has threatened violence, who has exhibited violent behavior needs to be reported to law enforcement. A student who has committed a crime by issuing a threat of death using social media—a crime under Florida law—that needs to be reported, but under Broward County school policies, pursuant to something called the PROMISE Program, reporting a student, a dangerous one, to law enforcement is the sixth step—step 6—in their plan. Therefore, I intend to propose changes to the Federal Youth PROMISE Program so a school district plan under this program does not delay and does not discourage law enforcement from being alerted to dangerous and violent or hazardous behavior.

Fourth, we need to strengthen background checks. That is why I have joined with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle pushing for the immediate passage of Fix NICS—something that will require all Federal agencies and incentivize every State to fully report relevant information to the national background check database—because a background check is only as good as the information that is on it. This deranged killer was able to buy guns on 10 separate occasions because he would have passed any background check because none of this stuff that was known about him was reported to that system.

Fifth, we must begin to prosecute the purchase of guns by people prohibited from doing so. Next week, I hope to be joining a bipartisan group, led by Senators TOOMEY and COONS, in filing the “Lie and Try” bill, which will require the FBI to notify States when someone who is not allowed to buy a gun, tries to buy a gun and fails the background check, so they can be investigated, so they can be prosecuted.

In addition, we will be presenting a new law to provide more prosecutors to go after straw purchases, which is where someone buys a gun on behalf of someone else because that someone else could not pass the background check.

Now, there are some additional reforms that I am open to: the possibility of looking at age limits on semiautomatic rifles, the notion of looking at what could be done with high-capacity magazines. We will continue to explore and look at those. These reforms do

not enjoy the sort of widespread support in Congress that the other measures I have announced do, and, in order to successfully pass, these ideas will have to be crafted in a way that actually contributes to greater public safety but also do not unnecessarily or unfairly infringe on the Second Amendment right of all law-abiding adults to protect themselves and their families, to hunt, or to participate in recreational shooting.

Ultimately, there are things we can do that have widespread, bipartisan support that we can act on, that we can get passed, that will actually make a difference. These are impactful things.

I urge the Senate and the House, all of my colleagues here, do not hold hostage a piece of legislation that would work and that we all support because it doesn't have everything you want. There are things we can act on and do, and there are things we can continue to argue over, debate, and perhaps do in the future, but on the things we agree on—and they happen to be things that could have prevented this attack and will prevent future attacks—let's get those done. I have outlined those here today. There may be others, but we owe it not just to the victims and the families of Parkland but to all Americans everywhere; for this attack may have happened in Southern Florida, but there is no reason it can't happen somewhere else and, I fear, will happen somewhere else if we do not fix the deficiencies and the flaws in our policies, in our laws, and in the way they are enforced.

We have learned from this incident what is wrong with our system. Let us fix it. We have an opportunity to do so while we continue to debate and work on the issues we do not agree on. That is what I hope we will do, and that is what I commit to doing everything I can to achieve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Quattlebaum nomination?

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 69, nays 28, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 42 Ex.]

YEAS—69

Alexander	Boozman	Cochran
Baldwin	Burr	Collins
Barrasso	Capito	Coons
Bennet	Carper	Corker
Blunt	Cassidy	Cornyn

Cortez Masto	Inhofe	Portman
Cotton	Isakson	Reed
Crapo	Johnson	Risch
Cruz	Jones	Roberts
Daines	Kaine	Rubio
Donnelly	Kennedy	Sasse
Enzi	King	Scott
Ernst	Lankford	Shaheen
Fischer	Leahy	Shelby
Gardner	Lee	Sullivan
Graham	Manchin	Tester
Grassley	McCaskill	Thune
Hassan	McConnell	Tillis
Hatch	Moran	Toomey
Heitkamp	Murkowski	Warner
Heller	Nelson	Whitehouse
Hirono	Paul	Wicker
Hoeven	Perdue	Young

NAYS—28

Blumenthal	Harris	Schatz
Booker	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Klobuchar	Smith
Cantwell	Markey	Stabenow
Cardin	Menendez	Udall
Casey	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Feinstein	Peters	
Gillibrand	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—3

Flake	McCain	Rounds
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, John Kennedy, Richard Burr, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, Patrick J. Toomey, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator